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ABSTRACT

In fiscal year (FY) 1988, a total of 18,869 individuals took only noncredit classes at Prince George's Community College (PGCC), compared to 17,599 who enrolled exclusively in credit classes. A study was conducted to assess student outcomes in continuing education, using data from state reporting systems, interviews with apprenticeship and licensure agencies, college records, and findings from a statewide survey of noncredit students. The study also included a survey of 2,550 students who had attended PGCC noncredit courses during FY 1987. Study findings included the following: (1) 36% of the survey respondents were employed full-time, 6% were working part-time, and 45% were retired; (2) 91% had satisfactorily completed all course requirements; (3) of those students who had taken the noncredit class to prepare for entry into a first career, 71% had achieved that goal; (4) PGCC provided contract training to 36 businesses, governments, and other organizations in FY 1988; (5) during FY 1988, PGCC identified 26 private businesses and 25 government agencies that utilized the college's open enrollment courses for their employee professional development needs; and (6) 82% of PGCC's non-credit students indicated that they had attended all class sessions, and 85% rated their instructors as "good" or "very good." Comparisons between PGCC's and statewide survey findings are presented throughout the report. (AYC)

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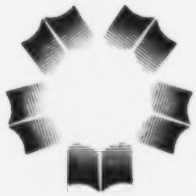
CONTINUING EDUCATION OUTCOMES AT PRINCE GEORGE'S COMMUNITY COLLEGE



PRINCE GEORGE'S
COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Office of Institutional Research and Analysis

Research Brief RB89-7
November 1988

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PRINCE GEORGE'S COMMUNITY COLLEGE
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CONTINUING EDUCATION OUTCOMES
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Introduction

Nationally, the focus of recent accountability efforts has been almost exclusively on credit programs. Few of the conferences or journal articles have examined the outcomes of noncredit, continuing education courses. Yet continuing education is growing, both in absolute terms and proportionately, at many campuses around the country. Colleges should be held accountable for the outcomes of their noncredit, as well as credit, programs.

In both FY87 and FY88, more PGCC students enrolled in noncredit courses than credit courses. A total of 18,869 different individuals took only noncredit classes at PGCC during fiscal year 1988, compared to 17,599 enrolling exclusively in credit classes. An additional 1,337 people took both credit and noncredit courses at PGCC during the year:

Total PGCC Unduplicated Headcount, FY87-88

	FY87	FY88
Noncredit classes only	17,852	18,869
Credit classes only	17,527	17,599
Both credit and noncredit	1,167	1,337
Total student headcount	36,546	37,805

While more students were served in a noncredit than credit capacity, credit operations still accounted for the majority of instructional activity, as measured by instructional contact hours or full-time equivalents (FTEs). During FY88 the college generated 9,168 total FTEs, of which 2,689.5 or 29 percent were from noncredit operations.

Several measures of continuing education student outcomes are presented below; first, however, is a brief review of statewide efforts to assess continuing education outcomes.

Several Maryland community colleges (including PGCC) and the State Board for Community Colleges have been concerned with measuring continuing education outcomes from the beginning of their concerted evaluation efforts. The Maryland Community College Evaluation System, approved by SBCC in March, 1979, included biennial reviews of continuing education courses and surveys of noncredit students among its components. Five months earlier, in October 1978, state community colleges and SBCC staff conducted the first statewide survey of continuing education students. Noncredit students were surveyed statewide again three years later. While much was learned from these early efforts, no attempt was made during these years to develop a comprehensive accountability system for continuing education.

The move to create a systematic and outcomes-oriented continuing education evaluation process began in earnest in the fall of 1986. The State Board appointed an advisory committee of continuing education deans and institutional research directors from the community colleges to help identify outcomes measures, improve data collection, and develop reporting mechanisms for continuing education. The advisory committee first met with the SBCC staff in September, 1986, and over the course of two years guided the implementation of the evaluation system described in its report Continuing Education Outcomes, published by SBCC in September 1988.

Methodology

Continuing education outcomes were analyzed under four headings: apprenticeship programs, business and industry training, licensure/certification, and student enrollment, including in open-enrollment courses. Students in work-related courses, in non-vocational ("general") courses, and senior citizens were analyzed separately. (Only some of the findings are highlighted here; in most cases, data are shown for all students under age 60.) Information sources included state reporting systems, interviews with apprenticeship and licensure agencies, college records, and a statewide student survey. Research questions guiding the survey design concerned course completion, goal achievement, and ratings of instructional quality and administrative procedures. The survey population consisted of all eligible students enrolled in state-funded continuing education courses conducted during FY87. A stratified random sample was selected from the end-of-year file by SBCC. The sample included 10 percent of the (unduplicated) students enrolled in remedial, community development, consumer, health care/science, general interest, general education, and family life courses. The sample also included 20 percent of the students enrolled in work-related courses (vocational/technical, licensure/certification, apprenticeship, and business/industry training) to ensure sufficient respondents in both types of

courses at every college. Responses were weighted during analysis to allow generalizations to all registrants in state-funded courses.

Questionnaires were mailed on November 30, 1987 to 2,550 students who had attended PGCC noncredit courses during FY87. The postal service returned 195 as undeliverable. By the time analysis commenced, 1,017 students had responded, for an adjusted response rate (excluding the undeliverables) of 43 percent. The comparable statewide response rate was 40 percent.

Most Recent Outcomes Indicators

The most recent outcomes information for noncredit students comes from the statewide study, particularly the survey of FY87 students. Thirty-six percent of the PGCC respondents were employed full-time at the time of the survey. Six percent were working part-time; 7 percent were unemployed. Forty-five percent of the respondents were retired. The remaining respondents reported "other" employment situations. Twenty-nine percent of the PGCC noncredit students who responded to the survey had bachelors' degrees or above; 11 percent had graduate degrees.

Ninety-one percent of PGCC's responding noncredit students said they had satisfactorily completed all course requirements. Students were asked what their primary goal was in attending the noncredit class at PGCC, and to what extent they had achieved their goal. The percentage reporting they had "completely" or "mostly" achieved their goal, the top two ratings on a five-point scale, were as follows for each goal category:

Student Goal Achievement
Percent Saying Goal "Completely" or "Mostly" Achieved
All Respondents, 1987 Continuing Education Survey

Student Goal in Taking Noncredit Class	PGCC	Statewide
Prepare for entry into first career	71%	71%
Prepare for entry into different career	68%	62%
Update skills for current job	67%	69%
Self-enrichment	75%	76%
Other goals	80%	74%

Further findings from the student survey are reported below under peer college comparisons.

PGCC supports county economic development by providing extensive workforce enhancement activities through its continuing education and professional development programs. The following organizations met their specific training needs in FY88 through negotiated contracts with PGCC:

Organizations Served by PGCC Contract Training, FY88

Adventist Health Systems
Andrews Air Force Base
Arundel Asphalt Company
Asbestos Workers Union #24
Associated Builders and Contractors
Beretta USA, Inc.
Capital Centre
Computer Science Corporation
Craftmasters, Inc.
Engineering Review Programs of Greater Washington
Federal Tower Credit Union
Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation
General Electric
Goddard Space Flight Center
Hechinger, Inc.
Hughes Technical Services
Independent Electrical Contractors, Inc.
Ironworkers Joint Apprentice/Training Committee
John Hanson Savings Bank
Kennedy Institute
Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission
Maryland State Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
METRO Transit Police
National Association of Independent Fee Appraisers
Operating Engineers Local 77 Training School
Ottenberg Bakery
Painters/Decorators District Council 51
Pizza Movers
Prince George's County
- Department of Aging
- Department of Mental Health
- Department of Social Services
- Firefighters Training Facility
- Office of Personnel Training
- Police Training Academy
- Public School System
- Housing and Community Development

Private Industry Council
Queen Anne School
Sheetmetal Training School
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington Building and Trades Council
Washington Joint Electrical Apprenticeship Training Council
Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission

In addition to the contract training listed above, many county businesses met their employee training needs through the college's open enrollment courses. During FY88, the college identified 26 private businesses and 25 government agencies that utilized open enrollment courses for their employee professional development needs. The total number of organizations using open enrollment courses in this way was undoubtedly larger, as employees may attend open enrollment courses with the encouragement and/or financial assistance of their employers without the college being notified.

Time Series and Peer College Comparisons

Data from the 1978 and 1981 surveys of continuing education students were judged unacceptable for comparative trend analysis. Both the sampling method and the administration of the earlier surveys were flawed. Thus, time series analysis was restricted to a review of enrollment data. If growth is a sign of health, the college's noncredit program has been healthy during the 1980s:

PGCC Continuing Education
State-funded Full-time Equivalent Enrollment

Fiscal Year	Informal Courses	Contract Training	Special Populations	Total FTEs
1988	521.5	851.1	1,316.9	2,689.5
1987	458.4	820.5	1,275.3	2,554.2
1986	524.3	697.2	993.1	2,214.6
1985	509.8	607.4	811.1	1,928.3
1984	486.1	208.4	699.1	1,393.7
1983	442.2	79.9	520.7	1,042.8
1982	353.8	118.1	367.9	839.8
1981	381.9	131.7	218.4	732.0

Noncredit FTEs grew 267 percent over the 1981-88 period. Growth was strongest in special populations, which experienced a five-fold increase in FTEs over the period. Senior citizens accounted for 94 percent of last year's special population total, generating 1,236 FTEs in FY88.

Because the 1987 survey was a statewide effort, data were available for peer colleges. The comparisons presented below focus on findings for all students under age 60; the proportion of students accounted for by senior citizens varied across colleges and made comparisons of total respondents somewhat problematic to interpret.

A basic evaluative question concerning noncredit courses was class attendance; with no credit to be lost, would students make the effort to attend all class sessions? Eighty-two percent of PGCC's respondents said they had attended all class sessions, above the statewide average:

Course Attendance, Students Under Age 60

	Sessions Attended			
	None	One	Some	All
Prince George's	3%	3%	13%	82%
Anne Arundel	3%	2%	14%	81%
Catonsville	2%	2%	17%	80%
Essex	<1%	2%	11%	87%
Montgomery	3%	3%	17%	77%
All Md. comm. colleges	2%	3%	17%	78%

Three-fifths of the students under age 60 were taking PGCC noncredit courses for job-related reasons: 34 percent to update skills for currently-held jobs, 18 percent to prepare for a change in career, and 8 percent to prepare for entry into a first career. Thirty percent of the students under age 60 were enrolled for self-enrichment reasons, and the remaining 10 percent had other assorted goals. How successful were the students in meeting their goals? Two-thirds indicated they had "completely" or" mostly" achieved their goal in enrolling:

Extent to Which Course Met Student Goal
Students Under Age 60

	Completely	Mostly	Fairly Well	A Little	Not at All
Prince George's	36%	30%	20%	11%	3%
Anne Arundel	36%	31%	22%	8%	3%
Catonsville	36%	30%	23%	9%	2%
Essex	38%	33%	22%	6%	2%
Montgomery	33%	25%	28%	11%	3%
All Md. comm. coll.	36%	31%	21%	9%	3%

While the primary purpose of this analysis is to examine student learning outcomes, it is part of the larger institutional assessment effort. Student evaluations of the college's

noncredit instruction and administration can help the college assess its service to students. Eighty-five percent of PGCC's noncredit students rated their instruction "very good" or "good." Ratings for PGCC and four peer colleges were as follows:

Ratings of Quality of Noncredit Instruction
Students Under Age 60

	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor
Prince George's	46%	39%	11%	3%	1%
Anne Arundel	51%	36%	10%	2%	1%
Catonsville	53%	34%	11%	2%	0%
Essex	45%	44%	9%	2%	0%
Montgomery	46%	37%	14%	3%	1%
All Md. comm. coll.	49%	36%	11%	3%	1%

Similarly, the registration and payment procedures for noncredit courses were favorably rated:

Ratings of Quality of Noncredit Program Administration
Students Under Age 60

	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor
Prince George's	45%	44%	9%	1%	1%
Anne Arundel	53%	40%	5%	1%	1%
Catonsville	48%	39%	10%	2%	1%
Essex	47%	45%	8%	1%	0%
Montgomery	43%	46%	9%	1%	1%
All Md. comm. coll.	49%	42%	8%	1%	1%

Summary

Institutional accountability reports must include assessment of continuing education student outcomes. Continuing education is an important and growing part of the community college's service to the county. Programs offered through the college's Center for Business and Industry Training, as well as open enrollment courses, provide an effective means for local employers to improve the skills and performance of their workforces at a reasonable cost.

This review of initial efforts to systematically evaluate continuing education outcomes found evidence of effective programs and courses. A wide variety of students with differing goals in enrolling in a noncredit course at the college reported satisfaction with their PGCC experiences. The proportions saying they had achieved their enrollment goals were similar to the reported statewide results. Survey respondents rated the quality of both the instruction and the administration of PGCC noncredit courses favorably. When asked if they would recommend the course to others with goals similar to their own, 91 percent of the PGCC students said yes, above the statewide average of 89 percent.

The success of the college's continuing education program in supporting county economic development is suggested by the continued growth in business training courses. In addition to employee enrollment in open enrollment courses, contract training activity has increased each of the past five years. The listing of 43 organizations served by contract training arrangements during FY88 suggests the diversity of needs the college is able to meet through its noncredit programming.

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